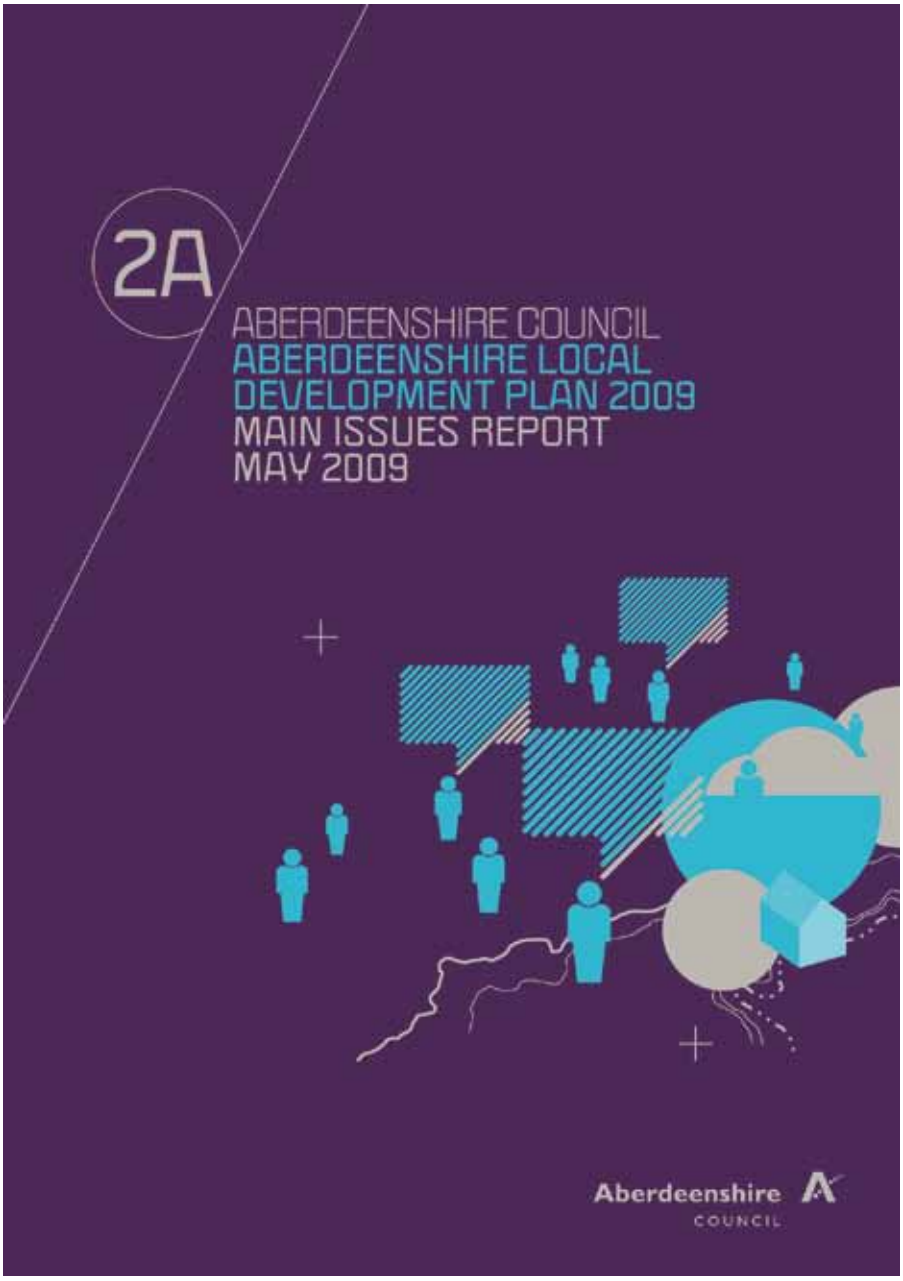
SCOTTISH TRANSPORT AWARDS 2009

Submission by Aberdeenshire Council under category 5

Best Transport Integration



Traffic Capacity Studies in support of the new Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan

Background

Aberdeenshire Council is producing a new Local Development Plan to inform the development of land governed by the Land Use Planning Acts. The process of preparing a Local Development Plan has a number of steps within it and can take a number of years to develop and agree. One such key step recently undertaken by the Council was to produce a Main Issues Report (MIR) which is the main focus of engagement and consultation on the Plan. The MIR has recently been published for consultation and contains recommendations on the suitability of land identified by the development industry for future development.

These recommendations represent a balance of views of officers across several Council services working closely with the Planning Service which leads the development of the MIR and ultimately new Local Development Plan.

Aberdeenshire Council's Transportation team is a key stakeholder in the development of the MIR and has carried out extensive traffic modelling work of towns in Aberdeenshire to identify current traffic constraints and opportunities whilst considering future development proposals and options for new infrastructure.

Traffic Modelling

Modelling work was carried out using Paramics models developed by SIAS Ltd, one of the Council's term transportation consultants.

Officers have worked closely with SIAS staff to create a total of seven town models for:

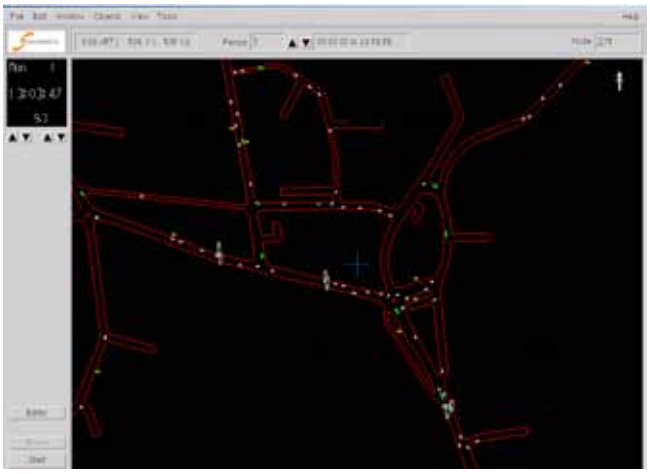
- Inverurie
- Kintore
- Westhill
- Ellon
- Peterhead
- Portlethen
- Stonehaven

These base models were then developed into reference case models, typically considering a 2012 scenario with the inclusion of all currently consented planning applications plus all remaining unused land allocations within the council's current Local Plan. The Transportation team have been working in partnership with Development Management and Policy Planning teams in the Planning Service for several months to assemble the necessary information into clear modelling briefs which were then taken forward by SIAS to produce the reference case models.

Both budget and timescale were limited to reach a point where conclusions could be drawn from the modelling work to assist in finalising the MIR. Therefore a strategy was adopted to carry out a limited number of "what if" tests for future development scenarios considering a 2016 horizon with options to include new infrastructure where it was clear that the road network was under strain. Typically 2 to 3 options and development scenarios were considered using each of the traffic models.

A diverse range of transport infrastructure including traffic signals, town bypasses, alternative junction layouts, grade separation and dual carriageways was considered and the studies also outlined the likely costs of these solutions. This information was then used, working with the Planning teams, to determine if future development was indeed viable at certain locations and where best use could be made of the existing road network by carefully considering the location of future development sites.

Dissemination of the Results



Deadlines were very tight for providing information to the Planning Service for the MIR. The Transportation team therefore arranged with SIAS to hold a day long series of presentations and workshop sessions with key officers from the Council's Planning and Roads Services present. Officers from Transport Scotland were also invited to this event as many of the proposals affected the trunk road network. The result of the day was a clear and shared understanding of the opportunities and constraints across the Aberdeenshire road network which would influence the choice of future development sites.

Once the MIR had been published and made available for consultation, local stakeholder groups and developers were eager to gain an understanding of the traffic implications of future development. This assisted them in making informed responses to the consultation. The Transportation team assisted this by publishing the results of the Traffic Capacity Studies on the Council's website and again teamed up with officers from the Planning Service to attend evening meetings in Aberdeenshire towns to explain the rational behind decisions informing the MIR and to provide an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions. This approach was generally well received by Local Members, developers, residents and businesses across Aberdeenshire.

Continuing Work

A number of key infrastructure improvements have been identified affecting the Trunk Road network. Work is continuing into 2009 / 2010 and these projects will be evaluated in detail working closely with Transport Scotland to ensure approval is gained to take forward the preferred solutions.

Transport Scotland has been very willing to take part in the process, including attending meetings with major developers whose proposals will have a major affect on the operation of the road network.

Identifying funding for road improvements and public transport projects will be of key importance to the success of the new Local Development Plan and a Council run cross service group called FIRS (Future Infrastructure Requirements for Services) has been put in place to address this. The group membership also extends out with the Council with representatives from Scottish Water, NHS Grampian and Transport Scotland also attending regular

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meetings. Of primary interest is to identify all future infrastructure needs for Aberdeenshire's towns and the group has played a key role in informing the MIR work. It will soon take on a new master planning role to bring forward the detail of new infrastructure and put in place a mechanism by which future development will contribute proportionally to the costs of new facilities and infrastructure needed to support them. This includes:

- Upgraded and new road junctions
- New link roads
- Parks, leisure and other community facilities
- Graveyards
- Schools
- Water supply and drainage systems
- Public transport services and infrastructure

The work in development of the new Aberdeenshire Local Plan has seen transport needs fully integrated with land use planning as a result of effective partnership working both across key services within Aberdeenshire Council, and with external stakeholders including Transport Scotland, community groups and major developers. Aberdeenshire Council has created an excellent model to take forward this work and the good relationships established with partner organisations will be crucial to the success of the new Local Development Plan.

ABERDEEN CITY AND SHIRE

Aberdeenshire COUNCIL